

Attorney General Biden joins local and federal law enforcement in Operation “FED UP”

Bold new initiative seeks to curb gun violence in the City of Wilmington

United States Attorney Colm F. Connolly, Wilmington Mayor James M. Baker, Delaware Attorney General Joseph R. Biden, III, Special Agent-in-Charge Gregory K. Gant, and Wilmington Police Chief Michael Szczerba announced today the implementation of a joint, federal-state-and-local law enforcement initiative to combat the use of guns to commit felony crimes in Wilmington.

The initiative will be called Operation “FED UP,” an acronym which stands for the two-part focus of the program:

Federal Enforcement and Detention coupled with Urban Policing.

Operation FED UP is an extension of

Operation Disarm, a state-wide effort launched in December 2001, which has increased federal firearms prosecutions by more than 200%. Both Disarm and FED UP are part of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Project Safe Neighborhoods, a nationwide commitment to reduce gun crime in America by facilitating partnerships among federal, state, and local authorities.

Under FED UP, beginning February 9, 2007, all felons in possession of firearms arrested by Wilmington Police officers will immediately be transferred to the ATF and detained in federal custody pending an initial appearance before a federal magistrate. At the defendant’s initial appearance in federal court, the United States Attorney’s Office will move for the detention of the defendant pending his indictment and trial. In effect, the United States Attorney’s Office will serve as

the local prosecutor for all felon-in-possession cases in Wilmington.

The majority of FED UP cases will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys. The City of Wilmington and the Delaware Attorney General's Office will contribute prosecutorial resources to this initiative. In addition, Harvey Rubenstein, a former President of the Delaware bar, has agreed to work with the United States

Attorney's Office to recruit retired and inactive private attorneys to serve as unpaid Special Assistant United States Attorneys for a select number of FED UP cases.

Like Operation Disarm, Operation FED UP will involve a public outreach campaign to deter felons in Wilmington from possessing firearms. The non-profit Operation Disarm Support Foundation has obtained a \$50,000 grant from the Department of Justice which it will use to purchase billboard space and radio ads to spread this deterrence message.

United States Attorney Connolly noted that the name "FED UP" reflects the attitude of law enforcement and the Wilmington community at large. "We are fed up with the high number of shootings and the fact that a small number of violent criminals are debasing the quality of life on our city streets." Connolly also noted that the acronym serves to emphasize that prosecutors will use federal detention laws to incarcerate immediately felons arrested with guns in Wilmington. "We hope," Connolly stated, "that the combination of the public outreach campaign and the visible and immediate detention of defendants as they await a federal trial will make "FED UP" a commonplace term in the vocabulary of felons in Wilmington and deter them from possessing weapons.

Too often, the difference between a homicide and a felon in possession of a handgun is the time it takes to pull the trigger." Connolly also thanked Mayor Baker, Attorney General Biden, the ATF, the Wilmington Police Department, the Operation Disarm Support Foundation, and Mr. Rubenstein for their support of the FED UP initiative.

"The escalating and disturbing use of guns throughout this

country to support everything from illegal drug operations to settling street disputes because an individual thinks another is showing him no respect, requires continual changes in our approach to law enforcement,” Mayor Baker said. “This initiative can greatly benefit Wilmington by removing people from the streets who, because of a pattern of serious crime, require the imposition of serious consequences. I am very pleased that Wilmington could join with the U.S. Attorney and Attorney General of Delaware in stopping felons in their tracks. This effort will greatly support those individuals who want so very much to be part of the growth and vitality of this City.”

“This partnership between the Delaware Department of Justice, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the ATF and the City of Wilmington is critical in taking illegal guns off our streets and reducing violent crime,” Attorney General Joseph R. Biden, III said. “This initiative is a significant step in our effort to make Wilmington a safer place to live.”

ATF Special Agent-in-Charge Gregory K. Gant added, “through our collective resources, ATF, the Wilmington Police Department, the Delaware Attorney General’s Office, and the United States Attorney’s Office will work to bring safety and security to the city of Wilmington, today, and everyday. We believe that Project FED UP will demonstrate strength through partnership, and will send a message to violent offenders that they do not have a place in our communities.”

“This is another example of how we can work in concert to seek and implement options to help us fight, at the local level, what has become a national epidemic of out-of-control gun crime,” Wilmington Police Chief Szczerba said.

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